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CHARLES MEDD

AFTER MASSACHUSETTS, MORE QUESTIONS

ANNCR:

AFTER TWO WEEKS OF PARTY PRIMARIES, CHARLES MEDD HAS A LOOK AT THE 1976 ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

VOICE:

EARLY THIS WEEK, THE SMILING FACE OF JIMMY CARTER APPEARED ON THE FRONT COVERS OF BOTH TIME AND NEWSWEEK MAGAZINES. BUT LOOKING AT THE RETURNS FROM TUESDAY'S PRIMARY ELECTION IN MASSACHUSETTS, IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE CARTER -- WHO FINISHED FOURTH IN A FIELD OF EIGHT DEMOCRATS -- GETS THAT KIND OF NATIONAL ATTENTION AGAIN. THE SECOND BIG PRIMARY OF 1976 SHOWED ONCE MORE THE EPHEMERAL CHARACTER OF ELECTION-YEAR POLITICS, DEMONSTRATING THAT POLITICAL FORECASTING IS STILL AT BEST AN IMPERFECT ART.

BUT THE FORECASTERS HAVE A LITTLE MORE TO WORK WITH NOW THAN THEY DID ONE WEEK AGO. THE RESULTS IN MASSACHUSETTS -- AN INDUSTRIAL STATE WITH A DISTINCTLY LIBERAL REPUTATION - REFLECTED A CONSERVATIVE DRIFT SUGGESTIVE OF A LARGER NATIONAL MOOD. OVER HALF THE DEMOCRATIC VOTE WENT TO THREE CANDIDATES WHO CAN BE ROUGHLY DEFINED AS RIGHT-OF-CENTER IN THE PARTY'S BROAD IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM. THE WINNER -- SENATOR HENRY JACKSON -- BELONGS TO THE PARTY'S MODERATE WING, WHERE HIS SUPPORT OF A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE, HIS CRITICISM OF U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE AND HIS BELIEF IN GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED JOBS APPEALED TO WORKING CLASS COMMUNITIES.

IF THE SECOND PRIMARY ESTABLISHED SENATOR JACKSON AS THE LEADER AMONG DEMOCRATIC CONSERVATIVES, HIS LEAD REMAINS

TENUOUS. NEXT TUESDAY, HE ENTERS WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A THREE-MAN CONTEST IN FLORIDA AGAINST ALABAMA'S GEORGE WALLACE AND FORMER GOVERNOR CARTER, BOTH SOUTHERNERS. BUT HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE WILL COME EARLY NEXT MONTH IN HEAVILY-POPULATED NEW YORK.

FOR DEMOCRATIC LIBERALS, THE EXPECTED WEEDING-OUT PROCESS HAS BEGUN. FIVE OF THE PARTY'S SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVE CONTENDERS SQUARED OFF LAST TUESDAY, AND FOR MOST OF THEM MASSACHUSETTS BECAME A KIND OF WATERLOO. AFTER DISMAL SHOWINGS, SENATOR BIRCH BAYH HAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE RACE, FORMER PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AND KENNEDY IN-LAW SARGENT SHRIVER APPEARS READY TO DO THE SAME, WHILE TWO OTHERS SEEM CONTENT TO LIMP ALONG. THE ONLY LIBERAL SURVIVOR IS CONGRESSMAN MORRIS UDALL WHO WOULD LIKE OTHER PARTY LIBERALS TO COALESCE BEHIND HIS CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT A POSSIBLE CONSERVATIVE RUN-AWAY.

ON THE REPUBLICAN SIDE, PRESIDENT FORD THIS WEEK SCORED AN IMPRESSIVE TWO-TO-ONE VICTORY OVER HIS CHALLENGER, RONALD REAGAN. BUT NEITHER MAN PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO MASSACHUSETTS, RESERVING THEIR ENERGIES FOR THE CRITICAL UPCOMING CONTESTS IN FLORIDA AND ILLINOIS. THE NEXT TWO PRIMARIES COULD BE THE FINAL STAND FOR MISTER REAGAN, BUT THE FORECASTERS, A BIT MORE MODEST THAN ONE WEEK BACK, ARE FOR THE MOMENT DOING MORE LOOKING THAN TALKING.

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